

The Song of SOLOMON

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The book is commonly known as the Song of Solomon. Its Latin name is *Canticum Canticorum*, from which is derived the title “Canticles,” abbreviated below as Cant. In the Hebrew it is called *Shir Hashshirim*, “the song of songs,” perhaps idiomatic for “the best of Solomon’s many songs,” in the same sense that “the King of kings” means, “the supreme King.”

Solomon “spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five” (1 Kings 4:32). A book of his Proverbs has been preserved in the Hebrew Old Testament canon, but the Song of Solomon seems to have been the only one of his songs to be included in the Hebrew canon.

2. Authorship. Both the title and tradition are in favor of the Solomonic authorship. It would seem strange if not even one of the many songs that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32) should have been preserved for us. Some assign Ps. 72 and 127 to Solomon. See the Introduction to each of these psalms.

Four main points sum up the internal evidence in favor of a Solomonic authorship:

a. The knowledge displayed of plants, animals, and other productions of nature, is in accordance with what is said about Solomon in 1 Kings 4:33.

b. The evidence of wide acquaintance with foreign products such as were imported in the time of Solomon.

c. Similarity of the Song of Solomon with certain parts of the book of Proverbs (Cant. 4:5, cf. Prov. 5:19; Cant. 4:11, cf. Prov. 5:3; Cant. 4:14, cf. Prov. 7:17; Cant. 4:15, cf. Prov. 5:15; Cant. 5:6, cf. Prov. 1:28; Cant. 6:9, cf. Prov. 31:28; Cant. 8:6, 7, cf. Prov. 6:34, 35).

d. The language of Canticles is such as one would expect from the time of Solomon. It belongs to the flourishing period of the Hebrew tongue. Highly poetical, vigorous and fresh, it has no traces of the decay that became evident in the declining period when Israel and Judah were divided.

None of these indications is in itself conclusive, but together they point strongly to Solomon as the author (see MB 79).

3. Historical Setting. The song has its setting in the golden age of the Hebrew monarchy. It appears that the king wrote of his own love. The question naturally arises, Concerning which of his many wives did he compose this love song? Solomon loved many strange women (1 Kings 11:1), including 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). The number given us in Cant. 6:8 is decidedly less—only 60 queens and 80 concubines. Assuming that Solomon’s song is a unity and that the marriage that it celebrates is his own marriage, it would thus seem that he wrote the song in his youthful days. The bride is described as a Shulamite country girl. An attachment to one of this class would be a real “love marriage,” with no political or other reason of expediency, as was the case with many of Solomon’s marriages. This type of relationship would make this story of Solomon’s marriage a more appropriate illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church, since parts of the song, at least, have been considered illustrative of such an association (see Ed 261; MB 100; 7T 69).

Shulamite (Cant. 6:13) should probably be Shunammite (see Kings 1:3) as suggested by the LXX. If so the maiden was from Shunem, a town in the territory of Issachar (see

Joshua 19:18), about 7 mi. (11.2 km.) east of Megiddo. Shunem was the scene of the touching story recorded in 2 Kings 4:8–37, in which the prophet Elisha raised to life the son of his Shunammite benefactress. The modern village of *Sôlem* stands on the ancient site.

4. Theme. The Song of Solomon is a beautiful song of ideal Eastern love written in the style of idyl poetry rather than in the more elegant style of the epic, lyric, and dramatic forms of literature. Some regard the book as an anthology of love songs, perhaps by different authors, rather than a work with a unified plan, because of the difficulty of finding the proper connection between the different parts of the poem. Others contend for its unity. In favor of the latter view are the following considerations: (1) The name Solomon is prominent throughout (chs. 1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12); (2) there are recurrences of similar words, illustrations, and figures throughout (ch. 2:16, cf. ch. 6:3; ch. 2:5, cf. ch. 5:8); (3) the references to the family of the bride are consistent; the mother and brothers only are mentioned, never the father (see chs. 1:6; 3:4; 8:2).

As to the exact plan or progress of the narrative, there is much difference of opinion, and any system adopted is at best artificial (see further on outline).

While the whole song is apparently a love story of Solomon and a country girl of northern Palestine whom King Solomon married only for love, the story itself serves as a beautiful illustration of the love of Christ for the church as a whole, and also for each individual member of the church. Both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures illustrate the tender union between God and His people by the relationship of a husband to his bride (see Isa. 54:4, 5; Jer. 3:14; 2 Cor. 11:2; MB 100).

A word of caution should be added. According to one commentator the Song of Solomon has been the “happy hunting ground” of allegorists for many centuries. The introduction of the allegorization of Scriptures into the Christian church can be traced back to the Alexandrian school in Egypt and particularly to Origen (c. A.D. 184–c. 254) as the first great exponent of this method. The system grew out of a fusion between Greek philosophy and Christianity. The method has persisted with varying degrees of virility ever since. As an illustration of the extreme lengths to which such methods tend are the following examples drawn from various allegorical interpreters of the Song of Solomon: the kiss of Christ—the incarnation; the cheeks of the bride—outward Christianity and good works; her golden chains—faith; spikenard—redeemed humanity; the hair of the bride like a flock of goats—the nations converted to Christianity; the 80 wives of Solomon—the admission of the Gentile nations to Christianity; the navel of the Shulamite—the cup from which the church refreshes those that thirst for salvation; the two breasts—the Old and New Testaments.

The folly of such a method is that it assumes a license for figurative interpretations without providing criteria to control it. It offers as the validity of an interpretation only the imagination of its exponent. True, there may be a general attempt to make conclusions conform to the analogy of Scripture, but the attempt is too weak to hold the interpreter’s imagination in check.

A safe rule of exegesis is to allow only inspired writers to interpret the symbolisms of prophecy, the features of a parable, the spiritual import of historical incidents, and the spiritual significance of visual aids in teaching, such as the sanctuary and its services. Only when a Bible writer or the Spirit of prophecy specifically points out the significance of a symbol can we know with certainty its meaning. All other interpretations should be

held with the qualification that they are private interpretations with no “Thus saith the Lord.”

As a parable requires many details to complete the narrative, details that have no direct bearing on the spiritual interpretation, so does a historical incident. The narrative is given in a complete, coherent form so as to present a consistent whole. But only certain features of it may be intended to be illustrative. Which features are thus intended can be known only by the confirmation of inspiration.

That the love between Solomon and the Shulamite is intended to illustrate the love between Christ and His people has already been observed. To what degree the various historical incidents in connection with the song are intended to have special significance when applied to divine love we can know only to the extent that inspiration reveals such a significance. A guide to such confirmation is found in the Ellen G. White comments, the sources for which are given at the end of each chapter. Beyond these comments we have no definite confirmation, since the Song of Solomon is nowhere quoted in the NT.

In harmony with these principles this commentary has adopted a working formula that will call attention to significant inspired comments where such have been made. In other areas only a philological, historical, and literary exposition will be given. The reader is left free in these areas to make his own spiritual applications in harmony with sound exegetical procedures. A number of interesting analogies will suggest themselves.

The song is an Eastern poem, with much of its imagery strange to the Occidental mind. This should ever be borne in mind in a study of the song. We should also keep in mind that the poem was written in an ancient, Oriental world, where men spoke more forthrightly on many intimate matters than do we in our modern, Occidental world.

5. Outline. The following outline given exhibits only one of many possible arrangements based on the assumption that there is an intended harmony between the various parts of the song. That such a harmony does exist cannot definitely be proved. The outline does not claim superiority over other outlines that have been devised. It is simply set forth as one of many possible working patterns. It is necessary to have a structure on which to build an exegesis. The outline is based on the assumption that there are only two principal characters in the poem, Solomon and the Shulamite maid.

Most modern critics and commentators adopt an outline that has three principal characters, Solomon, the Shulamite maid, and her shepherd lover. According to this plot, Solomon brought the Shulamite maid to his court to woo her love; but in this he was entirely unsuccessful, the Shulamite remaining true to her country lover and resisting all efforts to steal her heart. Such an outline, though it lends itself to a literal interpretation of the song, does not provide a suitable pattern for an illustration of Christ’s love for the church.

- I. Title, 1:1.
- II. The Marriage of Solomon to the Shulamite Maid, 1:2 to 2:7.
 - A. A dialogue: The Shulamite maid expresses her admiration for the bride-groom. The ladies of the court respond, 1:2–8.
 - B. Solomon enters. He and the bride exchange mutual expressions of love, 1:9 to 2:7.
- III. Recollections of Fond Associations, 2:8 to 3:5.
 - A. A delightful rendezvous in the springtime, 2:8–17.
 - B. The bride recounts a joyful dream, 3:1–5.
- IV. Recollections of Betrothal and Marriage, 3:6 to 5:1.

- A. The royal procession, 3:6–11.
- B. Solomon makes an offer of marriage; the Shulamite accepts, 4:1 to 5:1.
- V. Love lost and Regained, 5:2 to 6:9.
 - A. The bride harassed by an unhappy dream, 5:2 to 6:3.
 - B. Love recovered; Solomon idolizes his bride, 6:4–9.
- VI. The Bride's Beauty Is Extolled, 6:10 to 8:4.
 - A. Dialogue between the Shulamite and the daughters of Jerusalem, 6:10 to 7:5.
 - B. Solomon enraptured by the beauty of his bride, 7:6–9.
- VII. The Visit to the Bride's Home in Lebanon, 7:10 to 8:14.
 - A. The Shulamite's yearning to visit her parental home, 7:10 to 8:4.
 - B. The arrival of the royal pair, 8:5–7.
 - C. Dialogue between the bride, the brothers, and the king, 8:8–14.

CHAPTER 1

1 *The church's love unto Christ. 5 She confesseth her deformity, 7 and prayeth to be directed to his flock. 8 Christ directeth her to the shepherds' tents: 9 and shewing his love to her, 11 giveth her gracious promises. 12 The church and Christ congratulate one another.*

1. The song of songs. The expression implies that this song is of peculiar excellence. The Jews considered the Song of Solomon the most excellent of all Bible songs. The original title presumably compared the song with the other 1,004 composed by Solomon (1 Kings 4:32).

2. Let him kiss me. The speaker is evidently the Shulamite maid. Her speech continues to the end of v. 7, except for interruptions by the ladies of the court indicated by the “we” of v. 4.

Thy love. The change in person from the third in line 1 to the second here is common in Hebrew poetry. The word translated “love” is in the plural, indicating the many attentions and manifestations of love.

Wine. Heb. *yayin*, the juice of the grape see (Gen. 9:21; Sam. 1:14; Isa. 5:11; etc.).

3. Ointment poured forth. Among the Orientals perfume and ointment were very precious. For Solomon's bride the name of her beloved meant more to her than any perfume, however sweet.

Virgins. Heb. *'alamoth*, “young women” (see on Isa. 7:14). Solomon's bride is probably thinking of herself, though in modesty she does not definitely name herself. She says only that Solomon is the kind of man that a young woman like herself would love.

4. Draw. Heb. *mashak*, here “to draw in love” (see Jer. 31:3; Hosea 11:4).

We will run. This address is probably by the bride's attendants.

Into his chambers. Some see in vs. 2–4 an allusion to a bridal procession and in this phrase a description of the entry into the palace.

We will be glad. Presumably the bride's attendants speak again.

The upright love thee. Or, “they love thee uprightly.” These could be words of approval spoken by the bride, who believes that all should feel kindly affection toward a man as charming as her beloved. She feels that all will approve her decision to marry Solomon.

5. I am black. She probably means no more than that she is dark complexioned.

Kedar. Nomadic tribes of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13) inhabiting the Arabian deserts (see Isa. 21:16; Isa. 42:11). Bedouins usually lived in tents made of black goat's hair.

6. Looked upon me. This is evidence that her blackness was due to the sun rather than to her race. The LXX here reads, "the sun has looked unfavorably upon me."

My mother's children. It seems that the bride's older brothers had left their little sister to take care of the vineyards, thus causing her to become sunburned.

Mine own vineyard. That is, her own personal beauty (see ch. 8:12). Her brothers had not allowed her the leisure or the opportunity to give attention to her appearance.

7. Thy flock. This verse presents a difficulty in that it represents the lover as a shepherd, which Solomon, of course, was not. It may be that the bride, in poetic fancy, thinks of him as the companion of her simple country life. Some have suggested that Solomon disguised himself as a shepherd when he came to her home to court her.

Rest at noon. In hot countries the shepherds seek a place where they can retire for shelter both for themselves and their flocks during the burning heat of the noon-day sun.

One that turneth aside. Heb. *'otyah*, literally, "one that is veiled." If two of the Hebrew consonants are transposed, the reading, "one who wanders," is obtained. This reading is found in the Syriac, the Vulgate, and in the Greek translation of Symmachus.

8. If thou know not. Another voice is introduced. It may be that of Solomon, or it may be the playful response of the court ladies telling the Shulamite to be patient. In due time her lover will appear. In the meantime she is to continue watching her flocks.

9. A company of horses. Literally, "my mare." Solomon compares his bride with her ornaments to a decked-out royal mare. The comparison seems crude to a Western mind, but it is entirely appropriate in Oriental thinking.

Chariots. See 1 Kings 10:26, 28, 29.

12. Spikenard. A powerful perfume probably obtained from India. The plant *Nardostachys jatamansi*, from the roots of which the Hindus extracted the aromatic perfume, grows in the upper pasturelands of the Himalayas at an elevation of 11,000 to 17,000 feet (3,353 m. to 5,182 m.). Spikenard early became an article of commerce.

13. Bundle of myrrh. Myrrh was extracted from the aromatic resin of what was probably the Arabian *Balsamodendron myrrha* tree. The Hebrew women are reported to have worn under their dresses, on occasions, a bottle or little bag of myrrh suspended from their necks.

14. Cluster of camphire. Better, "cluster of henna flowers." The plant grew in southern Palestine and produced odoriferous yellow and white flowers. The flowers and twigs were sometimes ground into powder, from which the women made a reddish-orange dye to stain their hands and feet.

En-gedi. Literally, "fountain of the kid." It was a district to the west of the Dead Sea, about midway between the mouth of the Jordan and the southern extremity of the lake. A copious spring known today as *'Ain Jidi*, still flows in the region.

16. Our bed is green. It is not certain whether the bride is here describing a couch in the palace, or whether she is referring to her former natural environment. Some see here a reference to the nuptial bed. It would be natural for the bride to describe her present felicities in figures borrowed from her familiar associations.

CHAPTER 2

1 *The mutual love of Christ and his church.* 8 *The hope,* 10 *and calling of the church.* 14 *Christ's care of the church.* 16 *The profession of the church, her faith and hope.*

1. *I am the rose of Sharon.* The chapter division has led some to associate v. 1 with what follows. Thus Solomon would be the speaker in this verse. Hence, by spiritual application, both the titles “rose of Sharon” and “lily of the valleys” have been referred to Christ. Grammatically and contextually, however, it is more natural to consider this verse a statement of the bride. The word for “lily” may have either a masculine or a feminine form. The feminine form occurs here, whereas the masculine form appears in chs. 2:16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2, 3; 7:2. The feminine form occurs again in ch. 2:2, where it definitely applies to the Shulamite maid. Contextual considerations also favor this view. According to it the bride is confessing her modesty, stating that she feels out of place in a palace. She is only a country flower.

The word translated “rose” occurs only here and in Isa. 35:1, and the identity is uncertain. It may be identified with the crocus, asphodel, or narcissus. Some wild flower seems to be intended.

“Sharon” means literally, “a field,” “a plain,” and as a proper name signifies the maritime plain between Joppa and Mt. Carmel. The LXX takes “Sharon” here as a general designation of an open field.

2. *The lily among thorns.* Not the thorns that appear on plants and trees, but thorn plants. Solomon assures his bride that all other women, compared with her, are like thorn plants compared with a beautiful wild flower.

3. *The apple tree.* The bride returns the compliment. Her bridegroom, compared with other men, is like a fruit tree compared with the nonfruit-bearing trees of the forest.

Under his shadow. The bride not only enjoys the shade but also eats the fruit with great pleasure.

These words have been taken to picture the soul resting in the shadow of Christ's love, enjoying blessed companionship with the Lord. The benefits of such a communion cannot be enjoyed by those who pause but a moment in the presence of Jesus. Too often life's busy activities crowd out the precious seasons of fellowship that are so essential to a healthy growth in grace (see 7T 69; Ed 261).

4. *Banqueting house.* Literally, “house of wine” (see on v. 2). This verse has been used to further illustrate fellowship with Christ (see on v. 3; see also COL 206, 207; Ed 261).

5. *Stay me with flagons.* Rather, “sustain me with cakes of dried grapes.” These cakes were considered to be stimulating, and hence beneficial in cases of exhaustion.

Sick of love. In modern English she would say that she was lovesick. The bride was completely overcome with the thrill of her new experience and could not find figures adequate to describe her ecstatic delight.

7. *I charge you.* This verse is a refrain. It is repeated in chs. 3:5 and 8:4. The speaker is presumably still the bride.

My love. The “my” is supplied. “Love” is from *'ahabah*, a feminine form considering love in the abstract, and not the lover. Pure and natural affection is extolled.

8. *The voice of my beloved!* Verses 8–17 seem to be the bride's reminiscence of a delightful rendezvous in the springtime. The whole is probably spoken while she is in the loving embrace of her husband (see v. 6).

He cometh. The bride's quick sense of love discerns a long way off the approach of her lover as he comes to her mountain home.

9. Roe. In modern English, a gazelle.

Looketh forth at the windows. Literally, "gazing from [the outside of] the windows." Or the clause may be translated idiomatically, "gazed through the windows." Solomon is represented as playfully looking through the windows in search of his beloved.

11. The winter is past. Verses 11–13 constitute one of the most beautiful poetic descriptions of springtime ever penned (see Ed 160). The spring of the year was the time when the joyful pilgrims made their way to the Passover festival in Jerusalem (see PP 537, 538).

The rain is over. The latter rain ended in the early spring (see Vol. II, p. 109).

12. Turtle. Heb. *tor*, the turtledove, a species of pigeon. *Tor* is onomatopoeic, that is, the sound of the word imitates the plaintive note of the bird. Several species of the turtledove are migratory, and their coming marks the return of spring (see Jer. 8:7).

13. Putteth forth her green figs. Literally, "spiceth its unripe figs," probably in the sense of ripening them.

The vines with the tender grape. Literally, "the vines are blossom."

14. My dove. The rock pigeon selects the lofty cliffs and deep ravines (see Jer. 48:28) for its roosting places, and avoids the neighborhood of men. Thus Solomon indicates the modesty and shyness of his loved one.

The stairs. Heb. *madregah*, better, "steep places" as in Eze. 38:20.

15. Take us the foxes. The meaning of this line and the identification of the speaker are matters of conjecture. Moulton suggests that the bride hears her brothers speaking to her, or that they interrupt the bridegroom, who says he wants to see her face and hear her voice. They give the warning against the foxes that come in the spring and destroy the vines that are just then in blossom. Some think that the Shulamite is giving the reason why she cannot immediately respond to her beloved's invitation, since she has domestic duties to perform. Others think that the reference is merely to the playful pleasure the happy lovers would enjoy chasing the little foxes in the aromatic vineyards.

16. My beloved is mine. These words are a frequent refrain in this Song of Solomon (see chs. 6:3; 7:10). The expression illustrates the tender attraction between Christ and His people (see MB 100).

17. Until the day break. Literally, "until the day breathes." Reference may be either to the dawn of day, when the fresh morning breeze comes up, or to the beginning of evening, when the fresh evening breeze comes up.

Mountains of Bether. No such geographical mountains are known. Perhaps the word here rendered "Bether" should be translated instead. *Bether* comes from a root meaning "to cut in two," hence possibly cleft mountains are meant.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 7T 69

3, 4 Ed 261

4 COL 206; 7T 131

11–13 Ed 160; PP 538

15 ML 172

16 MB 100

CHAPTER 3

1 *The church's fight and victory in temptation.* 6 *The church glorieth in Christ.*

1. By night. Verses 1–5 are best explained as the recounting of a dream in which the maid dreamed that she had momentarily lost her beloved. However, the separation was brief and the reunion most joyful.

4. My mother's house. The women in the East have separate apartments, into which no one but the immediate family enters. Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother's tent when he made her his wife (see Gen. 24:67). The maiden dreams of the marriage taking place not in the bridal chamber of Solomon's palace but in her northern home (see on S. of Sol. 4:8).

5. I charge you. See on ch. 2:7.

6. Who is this? The pronoun "this" and the accompanying verb "cometh" represent feminine forms in the Hebrew. Either the bride is referred to or the "bed" of v. 7, which is a feminine form in the Hebrew. In the latter case the words should be translated "what is this?" The speaker cannot be definitely identified.

A new section begins. A royal procession is described. A description of the journey of the procession depends upon the interpretation of "who is this." If this refers to the Shulamite, the procession may be the one in which Solomon went to fetch his country maiden. If "who is this" or "what is this" refers to the "litter of Solomon," the bride may be the one watching the approach of the procession, and giving an eyewitness description of the impressive display.

Wilderness. Heb. *midbar*, which may mean merely a pastureland or a wide, open space.

Like pillars of smoke. This probably refers to the custom of heading a procession with burning incense which pervades the route of the procession with fragrant odors. This is an ancient and common custom in the East.

Bed. Heb. *miṭṭah*, a couch for sitting, reclining, or reposing. The context suggests that here it refers to the litter on which Solomon would be carried.

Threescore valiant men. These were the guards that surrounded the pavilion of the bridegroom. The security of the head of the state required the unwearying vigilance of such a guard as this.

9. Chariot. Heb. *'appiryon*, here probably synonymous with *miṭṭah* (v. 7), hence Solomon's "sedan," "litter," or "palanquin."

10. Pillars. Presumably the bedposts or corner posts either made of solid silver or covered with silver plate. Royal chariots were richly adorned.

The bottom. Heb. *rephidah*, which seems rather to refer to the support, or railing, on the sides of a litter.

The covering. Heb. *merkab*. Rather the "seat" of the litter. The word appears in Lev. 15:9, where it is translated "saddle."

Paved with love. The latter part of this verse reads literally, "its interior, paved love from the daughters of Jerusalem." A free translation would be, "the interior was decorated as a mark of love by the daughters of Jerusalem." The paving with love may refer to verses worked on the counterpane, the hangings, or the carpet by the daughters of Jerusalem as an expression of their love for King Solomon and his bride.

CHAPTER 4

1 *Christ setteth forth the graces of the church.* 8 *He sheweth his love to her.* 16 *The church prayeth to be made fit for his presence.*

1. *Thou art fair.* Better, “thou art beautiful.” The principal speaker thus far in the song has been the Shulamite maid. Now begins the most extended speech of the bridegroom. The reminiscent address extols the beauty of the bride and culminates in a proposal for marriage, which is accepted.

Doves’ eyes. See ch. 1:15.

Thy locks. Rather, “thy veil.” The veil worn by many Eastern women is a dark cloth that is suspended from the head. The forehead and the eyes are left uncovered. This veil covers not only all the face except the forehead and eyes, but also the neck, and hangs loosely down over the bosom.

A flock of goats. Her hair is black and sleek like the hair of Palestinian goats, which were mostly black or dark brown in color.

2. *Flock of sheep.* The teeth are beautifully white, well formed, and evenly paired. None is missing.

3. *Speech.* Rather the “mouth” as an instrument of speech.

Temples. Heb. *raqqah*, from a root meaning “to be thin,” “to be weak,” hence the thin parts of the skull on each side of the eyes. Some suggest that the cheeks are intended.

4. *Bucklers.* Bucklers were frequently hung about towers, both as ornaments and to have at hand in time of emergency.

6. *Day break.* See on ch. 2:17. This seems to be another refrain, perhaps spoken by the bride in her modesty and humility, to check the fervor of the bridegroom. He, however, immediately continues to pour forth his love with new expressions of affection.

7. *Thou art all fair.* You are altogether lovely, you do not have a single defect. Jesus is represented as saying these words to the church, His bride (see MH 356; MB 100).

8. *Amana.* The Anti-Lebanon Mts.

Shenir. The Amorite as well as the Ugaritic and Akkadian name for Mt. Hermon (see Deut. 3:9). The two mountains may stand in apposition here, or Shenir may be a prominent peak of Hermon. Solomon wants the Shulamite maiden to leave all the beautiful mountains of her northern country land.

9. *Ravished my heart.* The Hebrew verb is derived from the noun “heart.” Solomon said literally, “you have hearted me.” Perhaps what he meant was, “you have encouraged me.”

10. *Thy love.* Literally, “thy loves,” that is, the many attentions and manifestations of love (see ch. 1:2).

12. *A garden inclosed.* Under the symbolic expression of an enclosed garden King Solomon proposes marriage, and under the same symbol is accepted by the Shulamite maiden (v. 16). No one has ever entered this garden, no one has ever tasted this fountain, the seal of this fountain has never been broken.

15. *A well of living waters.* The language of this verse has been used to describe the ever-refreshing draughts that may be drawn from the Word of God (see PP 234; PK 37).

16. *Come into his garden.* This is the answer of the Shulamite. She invites him into his garden to eat of his fruits.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

CHAPTER 5

1 *Christ awaketh the church with his calling.* 2 *The church having a taste of Christ's love is sick of love.* 9 *A description of Christ by his graces.*

1. Into my garden. This verse belongs properly in the preceding chapter. It is Solomon's response to the maid's consent to marriage.

Eat, O friends. Evidently spoken to the guests at the wedding feast.

2. I sleep. Here begins a new section. The bride relates a troubled dream. She dreams that her beloved came to her at night, and by a moment's delay she lost him. This is similar to the dream related in ch. 3:1–5, only here the emphasis is on the trouble rather than on the happy outcome.

3. I have put off my coat. She seems to be saying, "I have retired for the night; do not disturb me."

4. Of the door. These words are supplied and perhaps correctly so. Some think he may have extended his hand through the latticed window of her home.

5. I rose. Presumably still in her dream.

6. When he spake. We may suppose an expression of disappointment as the lover goes away.

I sought him. Probably still in her troubled dream.

7. Took away my veil. Evidently to see who she was.

8. Daughters of Jerusalem. In her dream she finds herself accosting the daughters of Jerusalem to help her find her beloved.

10. Chiefest among ten thousand. A fitting title of Christ (see DA 827; MB 79, 100; COL 339).

The description of the bridegroom continues through v. 16 and reaches a climax in the expression "He is altogether lovely." This description is frequently coupled with the title, "chiefest among ten thousand," when referring to Christ (see in addition to the above references, Ed 69; 6T 175; CT 67).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

10, 16 AA 275; CH 529; COL 339; CT 67; DA 827; Ed 69; Ev 186, 346; FE 526; MB 69, 79, 100; ML 114; MM 213; PK 321; 6T 175

16 MB 146

CHAPTER 6

1 *The church professeth her faith in Christ.* 4 *Christ sheweth the graces of the church,* 10 *and his love towards her.*

1. Whither. The daughters of Jerusalem now address the bride to see what more she has to say.

2. Down into his garden. The anxiety concerning the loss of her beloved is gone. She knows that he is engaged elsewhere. Nothing has really come in to mar their felicity.

4. As Tirzah. In vs. 4–10 Solomon pours forth lavish praise of his bride.

Tirzah is probably to be identified with *Tell el-Fâr'ah*, some 7 mi. (11.2 km.) northeast of Shechem, in the territory of Manasseh. It was doubtless noted for its beauty.

Comely as Jerusalem. Solomon takes his own capital city in southern Palestine to illustrate the outstanding attractiveness of his bride. Jerusalem was noted for its beauty (see Ps. 48:2; 50:2; Lam. 2:15).

8. Threescore queens. This is presumably a reference to Solomon's harem. The number of wives is far less than that given in 1 Kings 11:3. Evidently this song is written early in the reign of Solomon.

10. Terrible as an army. Beauty and strength are here combined in a description that has appropriately been applied to the church (see PK 725; AA 91). Some think that the question of this verse is raised by the ladies of the court when they first catch a glimpse of the Shulamite.

11. I went down. This statement is obviously by the bride.

12. Amminadib. The meaning of this expression is obscure. Literally translated it means, "My people, the noble." The bride imagines herself being lifted up and placed in a chariot, no doubt with Solomon.

13. Return, O Shulamite. Perhaps this statement is by the members of the cortège, who express a desire to look further on the now-acknowledged queen.

What will ye see? A charming display of modesty.

The company. Literally, "the dance." Some have suggested that this has reference to the choir of the bride's maids and the choir of the of the bridegroom's best men. Others think that the reference is to some local custom that we do not now understand. Still others prefer to transliterate the words as "two armies" (*Mahanaim*), and see an allusion to the "dance" of the angel host at Mahanaim upon Jacob's return to Canaan (see Gen. 32:1–3). If this be so, the Shulamite, at this juncture, gives a performance of the "dance of Mahanaim."

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

10 AA 91; CH 464; ChS 147; CM 7; GC 425; PK 725; 5T 82

CHAPTER 7

1 *A further description of the church's graces.* 10 *The church professeth her faith and desire.*

1. How beautiful. Verses 1–5 are a laudation, probably by the ladies who are looking on, although many consider that the words are spoken by Solomon.

Like jewels. The emphasis is probably on the jewels that she now wears.

3. Like two young roes. Compare ch. 4:5.

4. As a tower. Compare ch. 4:4.

Fishpools. Literally, "pools," as the same word is translated in 2 Sam. 2:13.

Heshbon. Heshbon is generally identified with *Tell Hesbân*, about 15 mi. (24 km.) east of the Jordan. This site has yielded no evidence from Moses' time, but has well-attested remains from the period of the judges and of the monarchy, including portions of a large open-air water reservoir.

Bath-rabbim. Literally, "daughter of multitudes." Doubtless the name of one of the gates.

5. Carmel. A range of hills about 1,800 ft. elevation, forming the southwestern boundary of the plain of Esdraelon and the Bay of Acre.

Galleries. Heb. *rehatim*. The meaning of the word here is uncertain. In Gen. 30:38, 41 it means "watering troughs." It may come from a root meaning "to run," "to flow," hence "a flowing down." From this the definition "locks of hair" has been suggested. The king speaks of himself as held in the locks of the Shulamite's hair.

7. Palm tree. Heb. *tamar*. The tall and graceful palm tree was an appropriate figure for female beauty. The name *Tamar* was borne by several women (Gen. 38:6; 2 Sam. 13:1).

10. I am my beloved's. A refrain (see chs. 2:16; 6:3) ending the section extolling the bride's beauty.

11. Let us go forth. In this section the bride expresses her longing for her home in Lebanon. She may be imagined as begging her husband to take her back to her own old home, with promises of a renewed love for him.

13. Mandrakes. By popular etymology, "love apples." They were supposed to excite amatory desire and favor procreation (see Gen. 30:14–16).

CHAPTER 8

1 *The love of the church to Christ.* 6 *The vehemency of love.* 8 *The calling of the Gentiles.* 14 *The church prayeth for Christ's coming.*

1. As my brother. The bride seems to reminisce of the time before the obstacles to their union were removed. Not being able yet to declare her affection to him as a lover, she wished that their relationship had been that of brother and sister.

Despised. That is, her family and her friends should not reproach her.

2. Who would instruct me. As translated, the mother is the instructor. The verb may, however, also be translated, "thou wilt instruct." Either translation makes good sense. Mothers have sane counsel for daughters about to be married. The wise Solomon, too, could have thrilled the heart of his young bride by sharing with her his vast fund of knowledge. In return she would reciprocate by supplying suitable refreshments.

4. I charge you. Compare chs. 2:7; 3:5. The repetition of this refrain lends strong support to the idea of an intended unity of the song.

5. Who is this that cometh? Verse 5 appears to be a description of the arrival of the royal pair at the bride's home.

Raised thee up. Literally, "aroused thee." Solomon probably means to say that they have come back to the place where he first inspired his bride with love.

Thy mother. They have returned to the home where his bride was born.

6. Set me as a seal. The bride is speaking, as is evident in the Hebrew by the masculine form of "thee." The Hebrew word for "seal," *chotham*, means signet ring (see Ex. 28:11, 21; Job 38:14; 41:45; Jer. 22:24). The Hebrews sometimes wore the signet ring suspended upon the breast by a string. Solomon's bride wants her husband to view her as such a precious signet ring.

Coals. Heb. *reshaphim*, "flames," "firebolts," translated "hot thunderbolts" in Ps. 78:48.

A most vehement flame. Literally, "a flame of Jehovah." Probably the lightning.

7. Cannot quench love. Pure love is such that nothing can destroy it. It cannot be bought. The highest offer would be completely scorned. This passage, telling of the invincible might and enduring constancy of true love, stands without a parallel in literature for forcefulness of expression.

8. Little sister. This statement may have been made by the Shulamite's brothers, in reminiscence of the bride's childhood days. It appears they had been debating as to how to deal with their little sister when an offer of marriage should be made to her.

11. Solomon had a vineyard. This was doubtless one of Solomon's many vineyards.

12. *My vineyard.* The bride renews her vows to her husband. She speaks of herself as the keeper of her own vineyard, but she transfers these rights and privileges to her husband.

13. *Cause me to hear it.* As the curtain falls, Solomon requests to hear once more the voice of his beloved, perhaps in a refrain he had heard her repeat in their courtship.

14. *Make haste, my beloved.* Thus the poem ends with two short verses that compress into them all that has been repeated over and over under different figures: the wooing and the wedding of two happy hearts.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

6 4T 334
6, 7 Ed 93